

Pend Oreille County

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September 10, 2013

Congressman Doc Hastings Congressman Peter DeFazio
Chairman Ranking Member
Natural Resources Committee Natural Resources Committee
United States House, Washington DC United States House, Washington DC

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member DeFazio

RE: In Support of H.B. 1526

The timber industry and Forest Service land has a large impact on the four northern counties in Eastern Washington. The total Forest Service land in this northeast region totals almost 5 million acres. This encompasses the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee forests, of which half is restricted from harvest.


In Pend Oreille County specifically, the county owns and manages its own timber land that totals about 3,200 acres. This is a vital part of funding local government that also supports local industry and makes us uniquely qualified to establish a Title IV Community Forest Demonstration Area. We have one mill left in the county which is working at half its capacity which has affected our local economy. Further, we are at risk of losing this last mill if there is not an increase in sustainable forest management.

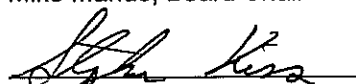
From our perspective there are at least four reoccurring themes hindering sustainable forest management. These are: funding to prepare sales, environmental analysis, review time for management activities, and litigation that stalls or totally stops much of the harvest that badly needs to be done.

The Forest mortality we are facing now is destroying habitat for wildlife, creating a catastrophic situation for massive wildfire's that destroy everything in their path and leaving millions of acres of forests susceptible to massive bug and insect infestation. Our watersheds are not being managed properly as seen in instream flows which is affected by overstocked forests. The threat of a forest fire to destroy watersheds is even greater.

H.R 1526 addresses all of these issues. It provides a common sense approach for returning to sustainable forest management where the planned harvest can occur in a reasonable amount of time. We do appreciate that the legislation allows for a temporary extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act. However, for long term social and financial health of rural forested communities we must have the family wage jobs that are provided by a healthy forest products industry. We will fully support H.R. 1526 when it comes to the House floor and will certainly contact our House members to speak in support and vote for the bill.


Mike Manus, Board Chair


Karen Skoog, Board Vice-Chair


Stephen Kiss, Board Member

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